

January/February 2016

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A publication of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church



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We want to hear from you!

Really, we do! Which stories do you most look forward to seeing in The Central Connection? What photos or features made you want to sit down and enjoy a few more minutes with us? Do you have any story ideas, photos, announcements or just want to share your thoughts about something we published? Send a letter to the editor! You can email them to: alinhenda@gmail.com or to connection@saccentral.org. Letters may be edited for space, but we really do appreciate hearing from you! Thanks!



Editorial

I stopped wearing wrist watches many years ago. Although that ended my obsession for controlling every minute on the clock, my life just got more busy with commitments of my time. Not having enough time to do all the things on their agenda is a reality for many people. And by now, our New Year's resolutions may be looking a lot like our daily To Do lists: too long, with some unrealistic goals, abandoned after a while and leaving a feeling of failure when we think of what we have been unable to accomplish.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't make resolutions, lists and plans! We just need to prioritize how we choose to spend our time, take small steps, (like going to bed 30 minutes earlier) and ask God for strength to do what we know is right, because we "can do all things through" Him. (Philippians 4:13). This is still a new year, and there is still time to work on those resolutions!

For this first issue of our magazine in 2016, we chose a theme of timeless value: How we are using our time. Personally, I have very specific resolutions for this year concerning my time management – where to accelerate, and where to slow down. How about you? In our cover story we talk about how our society is so busy racing against the clock, the Bible teaching about rest and how we should manage our time. Check this article on page 8.

Take time to read the other great content in our magazine, like our church news and Pastor Mike Thompson's explanation regarding how accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord are not the same thing, on page 12. And the End Times Saga is back with more adventures on page 13.

With so much going on, don't waste any time! Have a good reading,

Aline Henda
Editor-in-Chief



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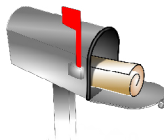
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Inbox

Thank you and staff for this month's issue of The Central Connection. I especially find the article "Not Accepted" from Pastor Buttery, very inspiring.

You may or may not realize the spiritual impact the above puzzle had on those of us who searched for the books of the Bible within the specified paragraph. This was most certainly not an easy puzzle, but I was determined to complete it since Aaron Earnest, in an earlier Bible study had encouraged us to learn and memorize the 66 books of the Bible.

What this has shown me, is; if I exercise the same diligence in reading and searching the scriptures, I will most certainly find my Lord Jesus in each page.

Love in Christ,

Paulette Sammels

Just a quick note to let you know how much I've been enjoying reading December's issue of the Central Connection. I have been specially captivated by the puzzle, Hidden Bible Book Names. I must have read that paragraph, over 10 times now, and I have only found 22 books so far. I can't wait for the next issue to come out that will have the answers.

Thank you for the wonderful work that the Connection staff are doing!!!

Ray Rengifo, First Elder
Sacramento Central SDA Church

We want to hear from you too! Send your letters to

connection@saccentral.org



Adventurer Club Christmas Outreach

On December 12, 2015, the Adventurer Club did their annual Christmas caroling outreach at two assisted living centers in Sacramento. The program consisted of songs presented by the children's choir and other groups, story telling and prayer. At the end the kids shared a handmade gift with the residents.

"Your program really brought the spirit of the holidays to them," said Marilyn Royce, personal manager of the house, by email. "The residents and families are still talking about the wonderful program you put on here."

The Adventurer Club meets every first and third Sabbath of the month.

- Aline Henda





Sacramento Central Choir



Sacramento Men's Choir

Christmas Grace: Revealing the Mystery of God

Photos: Joy Assumen-Carpenter and Nash Carlisle

By Nickling St. Fleur-Rustemaj



Everyone has their own idea of what represents the Christmas season. For many Christian families, especially our kids, this includes a special gift that you REALLY want, along with traditional cookies and pies and bright decorations.

For us at Sacramento Central, one special event encapsulates the true meaning of the season. This is our annual sacred Christmas concert, which we enjoyed this year on Sabbath, December 5. The Sacramento Central Choir opened the concert with "What Can I give Him," and "O Come to Us Emmanuel."

It again gave us great joy as we contemplated the priceless gift of God giving HIMSELF to us as our Savior. God actually entered our time and space in becoming One with us in our humanity. The narration interspersed with beloved carols, reminded us of the incredible miracle of Christ's birth.

My personal favorites of the evening were "I Believe," shared by Walter Aldrich, and "Christmas Grace," sung so beautifully by our choir. Echoes of Mercy enriched the concert with "Angel's Carol" and "Jesus Child," that I am certain not only I shed a tear. The musical celebration continued with "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," "When the Son of God Was Born," "One Small Child," and "Silent Night." We are so grateful for our Men's Choir, Voces para Cristo, and each group who gave us the gift of heavenly Christmas music.



Jennifer Buttery and Michael Aldrich



Enice Aldrich



Trio Voces para Cristo



Walter Aldrich



Echoes of Mercy



WHAT KIND OF KING?



Fountainview Academy brings their music to Sacramento Central

By Aline Henda
Editor-in-Chief

Photos: Aline Henda

When you hear the music of this unique group of teenagers who are members of the Fountainview Academy choir and orchestra, you join thousands of people who are blessed by their wonderful witness through Christian songs.

On December 19, they returned to Sacramento Central church, for one of their last performances of over 20 concerts in their 2015 Christmas tour. The church was packed for the concert, that featured the beautiful theme song "What kind of King?" and others inspiring melodies, and climaxed with the song "Angels from the realms of Glory."

"I love the invitation in this song, 'Come and worship'", shared choir director Craig Cleveland. "It was arranged by one of our students in the Academy. I found him on his knees praying for an inspiration and I'm sure God gave it to him. It's one of my favorites."

For the 85 young people studying at Fountainview, music is an integral part of their daily lives in school and on the road, with about 40 concerts each year, in North America and overseas. It's a way to dedicate their talents to spread the Gospel of God's love and "to bring honor and glory to Jesus of Bethlehem," according to Cleveland.

We talked to some of the students about their life at Fountainview, their music and message for the world. These are

our guests:

Jodie Mileng, 19, from Papua New Guinea. Sings in the choir and plays the flute.

Elia Taubert, 17 sings in the choir and plays cello

Justin Wiley, from Idaho. Plays the cello in the orchestra, a senior in his second year at Fountainview.

Alice Nickmann, 17, from Germany, living in Canada: sings in the choir and plays the clarinet.

Why did you choose to go to Fountainview? What attracted you?

Jodie: I was impressed with the choir and orchestra which I first saw on 3ABN. But what really caught my attention was the Bible studies and testimony sharing in the film. We're not Adventists, my family and I, but we do know, and love,

and serve the LORD. And although coming all the way to Canada from Papua New Guinea seemed like a far fetched idea, obviously God had other plans. Praise His Name!

Elia: The musical program, the nature surrounding us, and the spiritual atmosphere.

Justin: There are many reasons, but the main ones are the work program, the music program, and outdoor recreation. Another even more important reason is the spiritual atmosphere and quality of friends I found there.

Alice: After watching the Fountainview production videos I dreamed of someday going there. I am a very musical person so the music probably attracted me the most. But also was the atmosphere at Fountainview and the same beliefs we share in our faith.

Studying at Fountainview academy seems to be a very unique experience, especially because of the music you do; how do you feel to be part of this?

Jodie: At first I thought it would have been the best thing I've done in my life. And it has been so far. But now I have come to see this experience from a deeper perspective. Besides being possible Fountainview celebs on Christian television, I've realized that it's all about GOD, and that it has nothing to do with what I achieve, but what He has done in me. I'm honored to be a part of His work, and to be schooling at the same time.

Elia: I'm feeling proud to be there but I also see it as an opportunity to grow.

Music is very strong in the academy; do you sing everyday?

Jodie: Yes! We literally sing EVERYDAY! For one, music class is a part of our daily school curricular activities, and most of us just love to sing, whether we're in the hallways, in class, in the cafeteria, on Sabbath, and yes...in the shower room too!

Justin: There's music all the time! Beyond the 50 minutes of choir rehearsal each day, we sing at worship, before class, while we work, and on the bus.

Alice: Music plays a very big part of life at Fountainview. At work there is always someone singing and sometimes we all sing together. And then in the evening we have orchestra and choir

practice.

Do you get homesick?

Elia: Not really because Fountainview is like a home away from home.

Jodie: Ha ha! I would like to say no, but I must admit I did feel homesick when we were recently touring in Southern California where all the palm trees, bougainvillea, and hibiscus grows. And oh, the sun and the ocean! Yes, familiar things did make me long for home.

Alice: I personally do not get homesick, but I really miss my family. All the staff people are like family and they do a great job of making it a nice comfortable place for us.

Do you see other kids like you feeling inspired by this work?

Jodie: Yes. I met a young lady in Palm Desert who had just gotten baptized the week before, and she remarked that seeing other young people serve the LORD with His love radiating from their faces, inspired her to keep on keeping on.

Alice: I have met a few people my age and younger who are really inspired by seeing that they even at a young age can make a difference in a person's life through music, if God is in it.

Continue on page 10



From clockwise: Jodie Mileng, Alice Nickmann, Elia Taubert, Justin Wiley and Julia Fowler.

**“We are not allowed to take our gifts for granted,
we all have a mission until Jesus returns.”**

inside of us, we know that He is what we're looking for. My heart goes out to fellow young adults. Yes, it is possible to be young and love the LORD, and desire to grow in Him, and serve Him. God is not for old people only. He is here for everyone, and He desires that all men be drawn unto Him. It is a personal choice that we have to make. It's time to GET REAL with God.

Alice: I want to encourage everyone, whether you are young or old, to use your talents for God. We are not allowed to take our gifts for granted, we all have a mission until Jesus returns. We need to reach the people in this world now and we can use the

simple gifts we have been given and do our best.

What do you do before going on stage, do you have any ritual (as a group)?

Elia: We do voice warm ups but especially we pray.

Alice: Before we go on stage we always pray, usually just with a partner. We ask the Lord to help us do His work and let everything go according to His will. And to send His Holy Spirit to work in the people's hearts.

Justin: We also try to meet people before and after the concert.

Do you have other interests or talents you would like to share

with us? How do you like to enjoy your time away from music and studies?

Jodie: I love sports, especially swimming, and activities that require coordination and agility. I enjoy writing and reading A LOT! Besides those, I play the guitar and write songs. It's fun. And sometimes I'll hangout with a friend or two.

Elia: I love photography, rock climbing and mountaineering.

Alice: I don't really have much time away from music, its a big part of me and who I am. I am really interested in photography and filming. During free time at Fountainview I often go out and shoot some pictures of our beautiful mountains.

Discipleship University: in-depth Bible Study



Pastor Fred Dana conducts the Discipleship University twice a month

**By Ruthie Flynn
Copy Editor**

As a long distance "member" of Sac Central SDA church, I am being mightily blessed by Discipleship University Bible study, that is now offered online at saccentral.org.

This intensive study through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is planned for the next 3 years, to deepen our individual walk with God, and enable us to share the Good News of peace with God and assurance of salvation with anyone who is interested. If you have a computer and internet access, you

can join this online Bible study and be blessed as well--no matter where you live in the world. You're invited! An audio podcast of each class is available on this website, which provides a powerful "you are there" opportunity to be part of this ongoing Bible study.

Discipleship University is taught by Pastor Fred Dana every first and third Sabbath of the month, at 2pm, in the Camelia Room at Sacramento Central Church.



The Culture of the Clock

How to Manage Your Time in a 24/7 World

By Aline Henda and Hope Beale
Editors

If you feel like your day should

have 48 hours, you are not alone. Recent studies reveal that Americans are working longer hours and getting less time off to recharge. Everywhere people seem to be too busy. In fact, it looks as if the more cramped their agenda is, the more successful people are perceived to be.

"Time is money," Benjamin Franklyn said in 1748, and this maxim is a driving force for people living in the US. Time is calculated by the amount of money people make per hour. The hours spent working are more valuable than the results – it's the culture of the clock, allied with work, productivity and success. Multitasking and completing an already overloaded agenda seems like an efficient use of time.

This fast-paced life is, among other things, a result of culture in a first-world country, according to Psychologist Robert Levine. He made a comparison study with 31 countries about how they perceive and use their time, which he published in his book *A Geography of Time*. People from rich and poor nations have different views on time. Places with a strong economy have a faster tempo, the term used in music for speed. In the United States, Levine says, the individualist culture contributes to the fast pace of its society.

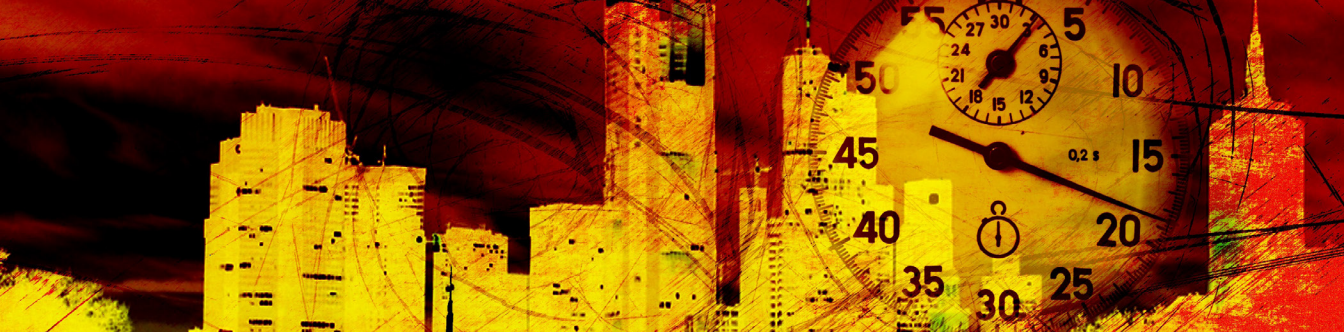
For Americans, life is rushed, even though advances

in technology have contributed many time-saving tools and appliances in all areas of life. However, many feel that some of those gizmos actually take too much of their time. Time management plans don't seem to work and the result is feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

Slowing down

Christians sometimes forget that extreme busyness can be a sin. Our use of time has consequences for eternity, as well as our life on this earth. Studies estimates that nearly 80 percent of adult Americans do not get the recommended amount of exercising, resulting in potentially serious health problems. Parents often suffer guilt because they feel they don't spend enough quality time with their kids. Moms end up cutting back on sleep and taking care of themselves, stressed with juggling the management of their household - the kids, the husband, and a job. And time each day set apart to spend with God is rushed or not done at all.

Jesus gave us an example in His life here on Earth, in taking time to regroup and recover. In the midst of all the demands of His ministry, healing the sick and preaching to multitudes, He called His disciples apart for some rest. "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (Mark 6:31). They were so busy that they didn't have time to eat. But Jesus taught His disciples the importance of taking time out for rest.



And He faithfully spent time in prayer with His Father, early every morning.

A day to stop

In today's high speed world, keeping the Sabbath (Ex 20:8-11) goes against our culture, challenging us to set aside a full 24 hours for quality time with God, on a day our society has set up as the most financially lucrative – and demanding for personal activities in our busy lives.

Besides all the blessings reserved for this day, God also gives us a weekly opportunity to recharge and rest—a weekly vacation from our work-driven world.

Time Management

Why should we do it? If you were to meticulously record everything you currently possess, you would have actually taken inventory of what belongs to God, for “the earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1).

Therefore, as we should consider our money and possessions a loan from God, “our time” also belongs to Him and a strict accounting of it will be required of us. Ellen White reminds us:

“Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than our time. The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it” (Christ Object Lessons, p. 342).

Redeeming the Time

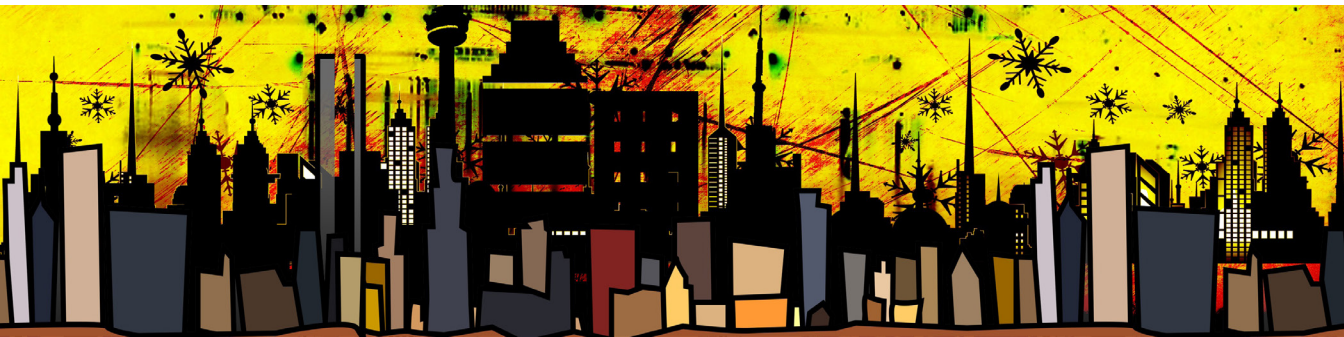
Time is our most precious gift. If you have wasted much of God's time, don't lose heart - this precious talent that has been so graciously loaned to us can be redeemed: See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15, 16).

To help implement our plan to redeem the time, there are three Biblical principles that we can begin with right away.

Seek God first. “Seek the Lord while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6) and ask that He forgive us for mis-using His time.

Ask God for the wisdom to prioritize what is important to Him. We often think of time management as filling our day with busy work. However, learning to plan our day around what's important to God - prayer, Bible study, worship, family, witnessing, work - comes with a precious promise: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33).

Pray for an obedient spirit. We may often forget or do not pay enough attention to do what's right in the rush of our daily lives, but God can give us strength to do His will, which is to daily, moment by moment, take up the stewardship of time and wisely redeem it for His glory. (Isaiah 55:6; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 5:13-15).



Tips for Maximizing Your Productivity

By managing our time, we can be more productive—and less stressed, more able to fulfill our calling. Here are some more tips on how to be productive at home and work.

Beware of the waste zone. We all have tendencies to waste time, whether it's Internet surfing, chat-room discussions, Facebook updates, talking on the phone or watching television. These activities can grab great gobs of time that could be spent doing more productive tasks.

Plan your week. On Sunday, take a few minutes to jot down what you need to accomplish each day of the coming week. Incorporate housework, shopping, children's activities, appointments and job-related tasks. But be realistic—if you continually miss your daily goals, you could become more stressed.

Prioritize tasks. When you have a particularly busy week, separate your to-do list into what's absolutely necessary from what can be put off until another day. Keep your mind focused on the important tasks and temporarily ignore the other things.



Multitask with purpose. Be wary of trying to do too much at one time. Sometimes we can accomplish more if we only focus on one thing at a time.

Ask for help. Enlist the help of your husband and children for assistance around the house. Plan a family council meeting to discuss and assign daily household tasks.

Hunt for shortcuts. Find ways to do some tasks in less time. For instance, throwing dinner into a slow cooker before leaving for work in the mornings can make after work time less harried.

Learn to work in increments. Train yourself to be productive in small

amounts of time, because sometimes that's all you get. Being able to start and stop projects quickly is a handy tool to being productive.

Schedule busywork, both job- and home-related. Block out specific times to check e-mail or put together a mailing project. Set a timer to keep on track, so those tasks don't become time wasters.

Organize your day the night before. One of the easiest ways to lower daily stress is to get ready for the next day the evening before. The day goes much smoother if the morning is not rushed.

Develop a relaxing bed-time routine. Experts say going to sleep at the same time each night and waking at the same time each morning is the best for your body. Resist the urge to stay up late working or being online. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes of "downtime" before crawling under the covers.

- Sarah Hamaker,
certified Leadership Parenting Coach

We Asked!

If you had one extra hour for a day, how would you use it?

Photos: Nash Carlisle



"I would spend more time doing what Jesus would be doing, which is winning more souls to the Father and reconciling Himself to the world."

Nathan Earnest



"I would reflect on how our Lord led me today and look forward to what He has in store for tomorrow."

Juanita Chew



"I'd spend it with The Lord. I'd find a way to spend it either praying or reading."

Adam Livingston



"That's a tough question, there are several things that I would probably use the extra hour for, but if I had one thing it would probably be studying."

Nancy Aldrich

RECIPE

Coconut Fudge Cookies

- 2 c. lightly toasted walnuts, ground fine in food processor*
- 1/2 c. unsweetened flaked coconut
- 1/2 c. whole wheat pastry flour** (pack flour firmly into measuring cup and level off at top)
- 1/4 c. ground chia seeds
- 1/4 c. Bob's Red Mill toasted carob powder***
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1 t. pure vanilla extract
- 2/3 c. pure maple syrup

- Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Position top oven rack in center of oven.
- Place parchment paper over a large cookie sheet.****
- Rub a large spoon and fork with nonstick spray, wiping off excess with a paper towel.
- A cookie scoop is a cool kitchen tool for making drop cookies. It has a spring-loaded handle, like an ice cream scoop, and makes uniform size drop cookies quickly and easily. Cookie scoops are sold at stores with kitchen gadget racks.
- If you have a cookie scoop, rub it inside and outside with nonstick spray.
- Maple syrup makes these cookies really yummy—but it makes the batter very sticky.
- In a large mixing bowl combine the dry ingredients, mixing well.
- Combine vanilla and maple syrup, then stir into dry ingredients with large spoon, mixing well.
- This cookie batter will be very sticky.
- Drop small scoops of cookie batter onto parchment paper lined cookie sheet.
- Flatten cookies slightly with fork and bake at 325 degrees for 15 minutes.
- After removing from oven, allow cookies to cool completely on lined cookie sheet.

Craving chocolate? Enjoy these delicious cookies! Valentine's Day is almost here, but you don't need a special occasion to try these!

- Store in a ziplock bag in the fridge.
- Warming these cookies before serving gives them a "just-baked" appeal.
- This makes a soft, chewy cookie with a rich fudge flavor. YUM
- When you are craving a bit of chocolate, these Coconut Fudge Cookies can hit the spot.

Yield: about 2 dozen medium size cookies.

*If walnut allergy is a problem, lightly toasted pecans or unsalted shelled sunflower seeds can replace the walnuts.

**If gluten sensitivity is a problem, 3/4 c. Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free Baking Flour

can replace the whole wheat pastry flour.

***Bob's Red Mill toasted carob powder is the very best tasting carob powder we have ever used.

Bob's Red Mill products are sold at Save Mart, natural food stores, and online.

****Maple syrup makes this cookie batter very sticky, and parchment paper releases these cookies easily after baking.

Submitted by Ruthie Flynn
Photo: Aline Henda





Ask the Pastor

Pastor Mike Thompson

What is the difference between accepting Jesus as my Savior and accepting Him as my Lord?



We must permit Jesus to be our Lord as well as Savior if we are to be saved. There are many professed Christians who seek deliverance from eternal death through Jesus. They are happy to have a Savior who bore the penalty for their sins upon the cross. They may loudly sing His praises as indeed they should. However, in return, they do not desire to live for Christ on His terms. They want to serve Him on their terms. They do not wish to have Jesus govern and direct their lives as Lord and Ruler. To put it simply, they are not willing to obey His Word - specifically His law. The reason for this stems from a wide spread belief within main stream Christianity that obedience to God's law is neither necessary nor possible. Such a false gospel becomes more deeply entrenched as Christians are also drawn into a religious experience that is driven by emotions and impressions, rather than the plain teachings of God's Word. Emotions and impressions are perfectly fine if they follow in the footsteps of prayerfully and correctly interpreted Scripture; and are kept subservient to Scripture at all times. Beware that emotions and feelings, however strong, must be disregarded if they inspire behavior that is contrary to God's Word. We can be sure that such impressions of the heart do not originate with The Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke of many professed Christians in the last days who will fit the above category. While claiming Christ as Savior, they will not permit Him to be Lord. They will live in violation of His law. They

will be powerfully moved and actively engaged in "Christian ministry." Their spiritual feelings and emotions, however ecstatic, may lead them to perform miraculous feats in the name of Jesus. However, they will do so while denying His law and Lordship over their lives.

Let us note what Jesus states in Matthew 7: 21-23, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many shall say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (The original Greek can also be correctly interpreted as "lawlessness". See NKJV and NIV).

Jesus also said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. Now, as never before, we must prayerfully study God's Word with a sincere desire to know truth, and with a willingness to walk in all the light which shines upon our path. Satan is determined to deceive the very elect. Our only safety will be found in clinging to God's Word in its entirety. It plainly teaches that Jesus cannot be our Savior unless we also permit Him to be our Lord. That means living out the Christian faith and experience on His terms and not ours. All Jesus bids us do He will enable us to do through His abounding grace. As Paul affirmed, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13 KJV).

End Times Saga

- Part 3

By Aaron Buttery

Ben Times stood on the curb of a street in Russia with his Uncle John and good friend Alex. They had landed at the Moscow Airport thirty minutes before, and were now waiting for their host to pick them up. "So Uncle John, is this going to be like a spy mission or something?" Ben asked excitedly. "Are you going to singlehandedly find the missing government files, break down doors, and make death-defying jumps out of helicopters?"

"Sounds like you have quite an imagination," Alex smiled.

"Sounds more like my brother let him read too many spy books," Uncle John muttered.

Hearing this, Ben stiffened a little, and changed the topic. "So what does this have to do with us anyway?"

"Your father and I came here a long time ago and helped a congregation," Uncle John replied. "It's the same one that's in trouble now. I feel responsible to help them."

Just then a black car drove up and parked right next to them. A tall, elderly man got out of the car and walked over to them. "John Times!" the man exclaimed. "It's been too long."

"Yes it has, Pastor Ivan," Uncle John responded, shaking the pastor's hand. "How've things been?"

"Good, except for this little scare we're having."

"Ah, yes. I hope to get to the bottom of it." Uncle John then gestured to the two boys behind him. "Oh Pastor! I forgot to introduce you to my nephew Ben and his friend Alex."

"It's a pleasure, boys," Pastor Ivan smiled as he shook their hands.

"You too, sir," Ben responded.

"Well, you all must be hungry and tired," Pastor Ivan said. "Come, let's go to my home."

...

Later in the evening, Ben and Alex were in their shared room

getting ready for bed, while Pastor Ivan and Uncle John met in the front part of the house to have a private chat. Alex yawned. "I'm tired," he announced.

"Join the club," Ben sighed. They were just about to climb into sleeping bags when the door opened abruptly, and a girl with black hair who looked about their age walked in. She froze when she saw them.

"Uh, hi," Ben said.

"What are you doing in my room?" the girl demanded.

"I'm sorry," replied Alex. "We were told to sleep here."

"What! Who told you that?" she demanded.

"Pastor Ivan," Ben responded.

"Pas-? Oh. Grandfather," she said.

"He's your grandfather?" Ben asked.

"Yes, but don't remind me," she exclaimed. "Him and his 'Seventh-day Adventist' beliefs drive me nuts."

Ben and Alex glanced at each other. "Oh," they said quietly.

The girl sighed. "Oh well. What're your names?"

"I'm Ben," Ben answered. "And this is Alex."

"Caterina," the girl responded.

"Nice to meet you," Alex said with a smile. "Now, about this little misunderstanding... Ben and I can sleep in the living room."

"We can?" Ben muttered.

Caterina looked surprised. "Well, uh, thanks. I guess that'll work."

...

The next morning, Ben awoke with an ache in his neck. Ugh, he thought to himself. I must have slept with my neck twisted. Looking over, he saw that Alex was

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still asleep. Ben watched his new friend. Something was different about him. Ever since they had met in Malaysia, he had had some sort of peculiar air about him. He was always polite and respectful and, for some reason, he had never once left Ben's side. It was like he was being protective of Ben.

A shadow fell across the floor, interrupting Ben's thoughts. Rubbing his neck, Ben got up, walked to the window, and peeked through the blinds. To his horror, he saw Russian police walking up to the front door of the house. Ben raced over to Alex and shook him awake.

"Alex," Ben hissed. "The police are here."

At that moment, a knock sounded at the door. Ben froze, but Alex jumped into action. "Quick," he said. "Let's wake up your uncle and Pastor Ivan."

The knock came again, while the boys slipped on clothes and ran down the hallway. They knocked on the first door they came to. Pastor Ivan answered, "Yes."

"Police are here," Ben gasped.

"Ah," Pastor Ivan didn't even look surprised. "Stay here."

Pastor Ivan walked out into the living room and answered on the fourth knock. The two could hear muted voices, and then people walking in and the door closing. Ben and Alex crept closer.

"Our source gave us those files, and we have all the proof we need," a policeman stated.

"What has become of this world when religious freedom is being taken away?" Pastor Ivan sighed mournfully.

"Don't ask me," the policeman replied. "I'm just doing my job. Now I'm going to have to arrest you, Mr. Burov, and take in any

others you have in your house."

"If you must arrest me, so be it, but leave the others alone," Pastor Ivan pleaded.

"Sorry," the policeman answered.

Just then, policemen came tromping noisily down the hallway. Several of them grabbed hold of Ben and Alex, while the others went and got Uncle John and Caterina.

"Dear God, help us," Ben prayed.

...

Hearing the clanking of boots in the hallway, Ben looked up from the jail cell where he and the others had been waiting. A police officer appeared and opened the door. Then he led them to the police chief's office. The police chief watched them with narrowed eyes as they came into the room. When they had all entered, the chief spoke. "On further investigation," he said, "We have decided that both Ivan Burov and John Times will serve a prison sentence here. However, you three children have been summoned to the U.S., where you will remain."

There was a stunned silence. Ben looked at Alex and Caterina. So much for a spy mission.

Stay tuned for more adventures on next issue!

Hidden Bible Book Names: The solution

Did you solve the hidden Bible book names puzzle from last month? Here is the solution. The Bible books are in bold print.



There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph. Can you find them? This is a **most remarkable** puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, **keeping** him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his **john** boat. Another friend studied it while playing his **banjo**. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend **judges** the **job** of solving this puzzle so involving, **she brews** a cup of tea to help her nerves. **There** will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a **fact**. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a **jam**, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalized. **Truthfully**, **from** answers we get, we are forced to admit **it usually** takes a minister or a scholar to **see** some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our **genes is** responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph. During a recent fund raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta **Phi** lemonade booth set a new record. The local paper, **The Chronicle**, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As **Daniel Humana** humbly puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." **Those** able to find all of them will hear great **lamentations** from those who have to be shown. One **revelation** that may help is that books like **Timothy** and **Samuel** may occur without their **numbers**. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. **A chipper** attitude will help you **compete** really well against those who claim to know the answers. Remember, there is no need for a mad **exodus**; there really are 30 books of the Bible **lurking** somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found. God Bless.

Note: Osee appears in the King James Version translation of Romans 9:25 as a variant spelling of Hosea.



**Pastor
Chris Buttery**



The Measure Of Our Days

I was new to the district and venturing out to acquaint myself with the members of the churches. An elder told me about a particular lady who hadn't been to church in a while. I wasn't told how long it had been. Eventually I stopped by to visit her. We talked about her life, her family, and her faith. Cautiously, I turned the conversation toward her absence from the church. When I asked how long it had been, she wasn't entirely sure and casually stated that perhaps it had been a few years.

We talked some more and came back to the question about her church attendance. All of a sudden she got a look of surprise on her face. Instead of being absent from the church for "several" years, she had calculated that it had actually been fifteen years! She was horrified. She looked at me and said, "I can't believe it has been that long!" Fortunately, this realization motivated her to make a comeback to our church and a renewed commitment to her relationship with the Lord.

The phrase, "How time flies," was first recorded about 1800. Alexander Pope is said to have

stated, "Swift fly the years." No matter how you phrase it, time waits for no one. Sadly, not everyone who sees the quick passage of time will resolve to make the best use of it, as did the lady in my story.

No matter how we choose to use our time, it would be well for each of us to remember David's simple prayer: "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am." (Psalm 39:4 KJV)

No matter how you look at, our life here on earth is very short. In the United States, the average life expectancy of a person is about 78 years. Last year, USA Today got all excited when we reached the highest it has been in U.S. history – 78.8 (it had jumped up 0.1 points from the previous quarter). But in the grand scheme of things, that's nothing to get too excited about.

Thanks be to God, we have

eternity to look forward to! How long we may live on this earth is infinitely less important than the kind of lives we are living day by day.

How do you spend your days? How have you prioritized your time? Is God first and best in everything? Have you carved out time on your calendar to actively serve God and make a difference for Him in someone's life? Are you planning to "each one reach one" this year? What time commitment are you willing to make? I'm thankful that although I've let some time slip through my fingers, God is offering me the opportunity right now to redeem the time. Won't you join me in making every moment count for God during this New Year?

Could this be our prayer for 2016? "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90:12 KJV).

Birthday Calendar

January 2016

1 Johnny Cyrus John O'Keefe Anjna Spencer AntonioTangonan Dan Thompson Evelyn Thompson	Yilma Diaz Chloe Evano David Vukelic Nany Zellitti	14 Arthur Burkholder Edward Fenley Victor Horan-Armijo	Sergio Castanon David Karn Marcelo Uribe	28 Debra Garner Katie Kersanova Jon Maldonado Claudine Michel Lilian Splaine Mariana Syed Larry Walker
2 Vy Cao Agnes Hilleary Gabor Nagy Diane Pate Shirley Thompson	8 David Gomes 9 Gabriel Clinciu 10 Bryon Baldwin Amber Marks Hall Larry Ing Silvania Maghiar Walter Wahl	15 Hugo Cardenas David Mize Debbie Willumson	22 Kevin Carpenter Monica Mauth Amelia Toaisi	30 Ava Adams Elaine Lawrence Yvonne Martinez Catarina Sanchez Javier Velazquez
3 Janet Black Charlene Du Toit Louade Johnson	11 Bill Arrington Brenda Giggans Vincent Simons	16 Bennett Sutherlin Cindi Weekly 17 Lorna Cascio Marie Hampton Donald Rae	23 Emanuel Capraru Tara Cross Maria David Karen Delgado Georgette Gilbert	31 Shelby Cooper
4 Jose Isai Pinon	12 Jerry Anthony Marie Giese	18 Vincente Serrano Ellen Warren	24 Abigail Anghel Dan Salyers	
5 Kenneth Allen	Donald Matairavula	19 Cesar Arias Wayne Smith	25 Lillie Grant	
6 Cecelia Castanon LaDawn White	13 Orlando Ruiz Nadine Sarmiento	20 Cedriana Hibbert Silvia Manoila Cristina Nagy	26 Courtney Clifford Jonathan Garcia Arlene Marroquin Gloria Stowell	
7 Victor DeRose		21 Joel Brazil	27 Inna Inozemteva	

February 2016

1 William Bailey Michael Slater	Suzanne Lovell Vivian Winston	Akash Kumar Singh Vicki Taylor	Harold White	Victoria Balderas Conrado Laberinto Orben Sobrepena Wilhelm van der Veen
2 Jackie Ball Karen Nanez (Felix) Erika Rypich Chrystal White	6 Samantha Morehouse 7 Cheryl Filippio- Draunika	12 Albert Colmenares Gary Spainhower Joanna Vance	19 Angelica (Cano) Baez Joann Petunis Noemy Rosa Daniel Satoshi Thiele	Curtis Yates
3 Nathaneal Bognet Cristina Hibbert Jonathan Rainbolt	8 Noe Duran-Casas Sharon Fowkes Maria Gomez Yezel Hernandez	13 Mickie Babij Anna Banks Daisy Escamilla Katherine Laberinto	20 Reuben J Vaselenko 21 Tracy Archbold 22 Jonathon Baldwin Daniela Ghioalda Todd Hampton	26 Marsha Amorfini Joe Calise Gordon Hodges Pamela Howard Frank Ramirez Andre Randolph Dorreen White Martha Zellitti
4 Deborah Cunningham Aaron Grush Franklin Kilgore Ronniece Moore Adrian Simpson	Brenda Lafontsee Haydee Mercado	14 Eliana Brantley Florina Ilyes Soledad Tangonan Lexa Valdivia	23 Jacqueline Benoit Marilee Walker 24 Benjamin Escobar Roderick Hall George McCracken Jeanene Uribe	27 Isei Draunakamila Nancy McLaurin
5 Ruth Bahta Erik Drinkard Troy Jurach	9 Geneva Davis 10 Patrick Condon Jesse Crumpton Lindie Loro Mace Alejandrina Trejo-Labra 11 Jessica Castro	15 Geary Gomez Francisco Renteria Tom Schwartz 17 Walter Aldrich Rhonda Packard 18 Julio Silva	25 Nancy Aquino Neal Archbold Patricia Atwell	28 Winnie Comstock-Carlson Marquis Morgan Ann Olson